



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
KAMPALA**

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**“BUGOMA FOREST IS A TREASURE TROVE OF OPPORTUNITIES,
RESTORE & CONSERVE IT,” CIVIL SOCIETY DEMANDS**

As the world commemorates International Day of Biological Diversity under the theme, “Acting locally for global impact”, the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) and Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA) have called on Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other government agencies to urgently address unresolved challenges threatening the conservation of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve (CFR).

The call comes following the recent handover of the forest to UWA for management.

In a May 22, 2026 letter to UWA’s Executive Director, the two coalitions note that Bugoma forest faces land grabbing threats since the cadastral maps showing the original boundaries of the forest when it was established in 1932 and after its expansion in 1944 were reported missing.

They also observe that though the Ministry of Lands alongside the National Forestry Authority (NFA) opened the Bugoma forest boundaries in November 2021 and February 2022¹, the boundary opening report remains out of the public domain.

Further, the two coalitions observe that though the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) issued an order to Hoima Sugar Ltd (HSL) in September 2021 directing that the company, which is growing sugarcane in the forest, restores 18.73 sq. miles of the forest², it remains unclear how many square miles of the forest have been restored by the company to date.

¹ <https://observer.ug/news/environmentalists-call-for-release-of-bugoma-forest-boundary-report/>

² <https://www.afiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SBFC-youth-and-women-communique-on-WED-2024-5-June-2024-1.pdf>

Moreover, the coalitions observe that though Bugoma CFR possesses immense tourism potential that could earn Uganda USD 547,500 per year as identified by IGEN-EA³, this tourism potential is yet to be harnessed.

The two coalitions want UWA to work with relevant government agencies to address the above challenges.

HISTORY OF WORK

Worth noting is that since 2020 and 2021 respectively, the SBFC and IGEN-EA have undertaken research, community mobilisation, stakeholder sensitisation and advocacy among others aimed at promoting conservation of Bugoma forest.

The SBFC including community members have repeatedly engaged Uganda's President, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the European Union (EU) delegation to Uganda, various embassies, and ministries such as that of water and that of lands to address Bugoma CFR's challenges.

Further, when HSL started destroying the forest including areas that were not approved for sugarcane growing, the SBFC members raised an alarm in January 2022, demanding that the permissions granted by NEMA to the company to grow sugarcane in the forest are withdrawn.

On its part, IGEN-EA has engaged Kikuube district leaders, tourism sector operators and others to drum up support for conservation of the forest, while promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism.

The above efforts have contributed to gains such as the Bugoma CFR boundaries being opened, as well as NEMA conducting investigations and asking HSL to restore parts of the forest.

The two coalitions want UWA to lead other government agencies to do more, especially considering the biodiversity and climate stabilisation importance of Bugoma CFR.

BIODIVERSITY OF BUGOMA CFR

Bugoma hosts extraordinary floral and faunal diversity. The forest is home to 34 mammal species, including four globally threatened species and nine species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List⁴. Among the most iconic species in the forest are chimpanzees and the Uganda mangabey⁴, a species endemic to Uganda. Bugoma also hosts the grey-cheeked

³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PC64T12CcefQB3ADqJtBLwjOzZ-jT5Vn/view>

⁴ <https://www.afiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FACTSHEET-december.pdf>

mangabey, a species present in Bugoma but absent from Budongo and Wambabya forests⁴.

Other wildlife species found in the forest include four monkey species, elephants, buffaloes, Uganda kobs, golden cats and side-striped jackals⁴.

The forest also supports 20 amphibian species including one Albertine Rift endemic species, nine reptile species, 118 moth species and 292 butterfly species including four that are endemic to the Albertine Rift⁵.

Bugoma is equally an important bird habitat with over 225 bird species⁶ including globally threatened species such as Nahan's francolin and the Black-eared ground thrush being seen in the forest.

When it comes to plant biodiversity, the forest contains approximately 257 tree and shrub species including seven Albertine Rift endemic species, more than 12 globally threatened species and 14 tree species listed under the IUCN Red List⁴.

CALL TO ACTION

“The destruction of Bugoma represents not just a grievous loss of trees, but loss of globally significant biodiversity, cultural heritage, livelihoods and climate resilience. This is why the SBFC has been demanding that Bugoma forest is conserved.

We hope that UWA will work with other agencies to finally secure the forest from destruction,” Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the chairperson of the SBFC National Taskforce and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), says.

Ms. Helen Lubowa, an IGEN-EA member who also leads Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA), adds, “The biodiversity in Bugoma forest should be harnessed to promote inclusive and sustainable tourism. Communities need to participate in the tourism value chain and this can be achieved by various actors supporting them to be trained in tour guiding, driving, as well as art and crafts making among others.”

Overall, the SBFC and IGEN-EA want UWA to do the following:

- a. Engage Uganda Land Commission (ULC) to publicly release Bugoma forest's cadastral maps as they stood at 1944;
- b. Engage the Ministry of Lands to publicly release Bugoma forest boundary opening reports from the November 2021 and February 2022 activities;

⁵ <https://www.afiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FACTSHEET-december.pdf>

⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PC64T12CcefQB3ADqJtBLwjOzZ-jT5Vn/view>

- c. Ensure full restoration of degraded areas and removal of illegal encroachers including HSL, MZ Agencies and communities from the forest; and
- d. Strengthen community participation in conservation and tourism activities among others.

ABOUT THE SBFC and IGEN-EA

The SBFC consists of communities neighbouring Bugoma forest, civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector actors working to protect the forest from land grabbing, sugarcane expansion, oil threats and other destructive activities.

IGEN-EA is a network of over 36 East African civil society and private sector actors promoting green economic development and sustainable natural resource management in East Africa.

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